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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

August Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term August average:

Great Lakes Basin	112%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	126%
Lake Superior	62%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	136%

LEVEL news

Volume 5, Number 9 **September 8, 1997**

Risk of Damage Remains High for Middle Lakes

Water Levels of Great Lakes Decline

All of the Great Lakes experienced a decline in levels during August. Lake Huron had the smallest decline, with its August level averaging three centimetres lower than its July level, while Lake Ontario had the largest decline of 19 centimetres.

Dry weather throughout the Great Lakes basin during late July and the first ten days of August sparked the decline. However, wetter weather during the remainder of the month slowed the rate of decrease.

The risk of severe damage to shoreline properties along Lakes Superior and Ontario has decreased considerably with the decline in water levels. At the beginning of September, Lake Superior's level was eight cm above average and Lake Ontario's level was 13 cm above average.

Along the shores of Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie, the risk of damage this fall remains high. While the situation has improved slightly, particularly on Lake Erie, the three lakes are still 55 to 60 cm above average levels. If rainfall amounts are high over the fall months, these lakes are likely to be only 10 to 20 centimetres below the record high levels of 1986.

Lake Superior Lower than One Year Ago

During each month from January to July of this year, the level of every one of the Great Lakes was higher than during the same month in 1996. That string was finally broken in August, as Lake Superior's level was ten centimetres lower this year than in August 1996. As a result of the improvement in Lake Superior's level, its outflow has been reduced by forty percent from July to the beginning of September.

Public Meeting

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control is hosting a series of six meetings on proposed revisions to the Lake Ontario regulation plan. The

Lake Ontario 120%

first meeting is October 9 at 7:00 p.m. in Burlington, Ontario at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters, 867 Lakeshore Road.

Note: These figures are preliminary.

August Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term August average:

Lake Superior 113%

Lake Erie 121%

Lake Huron 111%

Lake Ontario 119%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Lake Ontario Outflows Reduced

As mentioned in the article on the front page, the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control has authority to deviate from its regulation plan. On August 15 the Board used this discretion to reduce Lake Ontario outflows by 200 cubic metres per second, or about 2.4 percent.

The St. Lawrence River between Brockville and Cornwall has been experiencing relatively low water levels due to the high flows out of Lake Ontario. This has caused significant problems for marinas and recreational boaters on the river. The flow reduction has improved the situation somewhat, but Lake St. Lawrence is still about 40 centimetres below average level.

The Board has implemented the flow reduction for a five-week period.

IJC Discontinues Criterion (k) Operations for Lake Ontario Outflow

The regulation plan developed by the International Joint Commission for determining Lake Ontario outflows has several criteria for deviating from the plan under unusual conditions. Under extremely high water supply conditions, criterion (k) changes the considerations used to set Lake Ontario outflows and gives precedence to shoreline property owners on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River from the Thousand Islands to past Montreal.

Last January, in response to high water supplies and rising lake levels, the IJC implemented the use of criterion (k) in setting Lake Ontario outflows. These conditions have now moderated on Lake Ontario, and the IJC has discontinued the use of criterion (k).

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control, which sets the Lake Ontario outflow each week and ensures that it meets the requirements of the IJC, continues to have authority to deviate from the regulation plan. The Board used this authority in the fall of 1996, prior to the implementation of criterion (k), to set outflows above the amounts specified by the regulation plan when this could be accomplished without causing adverse impacts to other interests.

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Webmaster
Last Updated: 2001-03-19
Last Reviewed: 2001-03-19

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